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SUBJECT: Lebanon Biographies of Potential Prime Ministers
Following PM Karami's Cabinet Resignation

¶1. Following are biographies of potential candidates to replace Prime Minister Omar Karami who resigned on February

28, 2005. According to the 1943 National Pact and the 1989 Taif Accord, Lebanon's Prime Minister must be a Sunni

Muslim. Several names of potential candidates are being discussed in political circles. They include Salim Hoss, Adnan Kassar, Ahmad Hajj, Bahia Hariri, Bahij Tabbarah, Fouad Siniora, and Tamam Salam. This list is not exhaustive and other names could come to the fore on short notice.

Salim Hoss, Former Prime Minister

¶2. Hoss was born in Beirut, 1929. He is a graduate of the American University of Beirut and holds a PhD in Economics and Business from Indiana University.

Hoss headed five Cabinets. From 1976 to 1980, under the late President Elias Sarkis, Hoss headed two consecutive governments, one of which comprised mainly of technocrats. In 1987, Hoss returned to as Prime Minister under President Amin Gemayel, upon the assassination of then-Prime Minister Rashid Karami. He held together what was left of a functioning West Beirut government until the election of President Elias Hrawi in 1989. Hoss again formed a Cabinet that lasted until December 1990. Hoss headed the first government under President Emile Lahoud's term in 1998 and remained in office until 2000. His record during this last period was not considered impressive.

Hoss resigned from politics after he made a bad showing in the 2000 parliamentary elections while he was Prime Minister. This was the first time in Lebanese history that a serving Prime Minister lost his seat in the Chamber of Deputies. Hoss attributed his defeat to a campaign orchestrated by his political opponent, the late Rafiq Hariri. Despite Hoss' decision to withdraw from politics, he remained engaged in national political issues. On February 28, 2005, Hoss announced the formation of a "third force" called National Unity Forum aimed at creating a middle-ground between loyalists and opposition groups.

Hoss participated in the negotiation of the Taif Accord, which ended the Lebanese civil war. He is well respected on the domestic and international scene. He is known to be honest, poised, and democratic. In his tenure as PM, he was not perceived as a doer. In recent years, Hoss' health has been failing. He suffers from asthma.

Adnan Kassar, Former Minister of Economy and Trade

¶3. Kassar is the most prominent Sunni in the current caretaker government. He has already announced his willingness to serve as Prime Minister. Kassar was born in Beirut in 1930. He holds a Law degree from Beirut's St. Joseph University.

In October 2004, Kassar was appointed Minister of Economy and Trade in the incoming Karami government. The opposition has criticized him for remaining in the cabinet following the assassination of late Rafiq Hariri, a fellow Sunni.

Kassar is a prominent businessman and banker. He is founder and co-owner of several companies with activities covering trade, shipping and travel, and industry. He is shareholder (with Walid Jumblatt) in a prominent Lebanese cement manufacturing firm, and in "Al-Kimiya Co. Chemical Industries." He is a co-owner of Lebanon's "Ksara" winery. Kassar is shareholder in Syrian companies "Agrosyr" and "Amrit Co."

Kassar and his brother are majority shareholders in Fransabank, one of the ten largest Lebanese commercial banks. His titles include Chairman and General Manager of Fransabank SAL, Chairman of Fransabank France, Chairman of Fransabank Congo, and Chairman of Luxembourg-based Fransa Holding SA. The Minister has been criticized for maintaining his position as President of the Beirut Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, a post he has held since 1972, while serving as Minister of Economy and Trade.

Kassar maintains regional and international connections through a web of industrial and trade associations. He is President of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. Kassar served previously as president of the International Chamber of Commerce (1999-2000) and of the Syrian-Lebanese Businessmen Council (2001-2002). He has served, variously since 1972, as vice-President of the Union of Arab Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture; vice-President of the General Assembly of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Mediterranean Countries "ASCAME" (Spain). The Minister is a board member of several Arab-European Chambers of Commerce as well as the U.S-Arab Chamber of Commerce, based in Washington, D.C.

Ahmad Hajj, former Ambassador to Great Britain

14. Hajj was born in Beirut in 1926. He joined the Military Academy and graduated as a Lieutenant. After his commissioning, Hajj served as Head of the Military Operations Room under then-Army Commander General Fouad Chehab.

In 1976, President Elias Sarkis appointed Hajj as Commander of the Arab Deterrent Force. After retiring from the Army, Hajj was appointed Lebanon's Ambassador to Great Britain. Retired from the diplomatic service, Hajj now writes anti-Syria, political articles in the Arabic language daily newspaper An-Nahar.

Bahia Hariri, Member of Parliament

15. Bahia, sister of the late Rafik Hariri, is frequently mentioned as a possible Prime Minister candidate. She has the heritage, and the money, to mount and sustain a campaign. But Bahia has named a high price for her participation -- the resignation of all security service chiefs and a successful investigation into her brother's death. Born in Sidon in 1952, Bahia is the youngest of the frontrunners for the PM job. She is married and has two children.

Bahia is a teacher by profession and is a Board member of the Hariri Foundation. She taught in a number of schools in Sidon and the south. The Hariri Foundation in Sidon, which she heads, is a major educational and charitable institution. Bahia was elected to Parliament in 1992 with 117,761 votes, second only to list leader Nabih Berri. She ran as an independent in 1996 and was elected by a broad margin. In the 2000 elections, Bahia ran successfully on a ticket with Speaker of Parliament Berri. She is chairman of the parliamentary committee for Education, Higher Education and Culture.

Bahia Hariri has come to center stage following the February 14 assassination of her brother Rafiq Hariri. On February 28, she made a moving Parliamentary speech about the

assassination of her brother. This speech was a factor in pushing Karami to resign.

Bahij Tabbarah, former Minister of Justice

15. Tabbarah was born in Beirut in 1929. He holds a law degree from St. Joseph University and a Ph.D. from the University of Paris. Tabbarah has practiced law since 1954 and was known chiefly as the attorney for the late Rafik Hariri's interests in Lebanon, including the Mediterranean Investors Group (MIG), Mediterranean Bank, and the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR). He holds shares in MIG. He and his wife, also a lawyer, suspended their practices during his term as a cabinet member.

Tabbarah has served several times as a cabinet member. He was Minister of Economy and Trade in the Amin al-Hafiz cabinet, April-June 1973. He was appointed Minister of Justice in Hariri's cabinet in October 1992. Tabbarah continued as Minister of Justice in Hariri's second cabinet formed in May 1995. He was re-appointed Minister of Justice in Hariri's third cabinet that was formed in November 1996.

Fouad Siniora, former Minister of Finance

16. Siniora was born in Sidon in 1943. He holds a Masters degree in Business Administration from AUB, 1970. He served as Minister of State for Financial Affairs in the late Rafiq Hariri's cabinets of 1992, 1995 and 1996. He was appointed Minister of Finance in two consecutive governments under Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, from 2000 till 2004. Siniora introduced some reforms at the Finance Ministry, which led to an increase in government revenues through better collection practices and additional taxes, such as the Value-Added Tax (VAT). These measures made Siniora unpopular among Lebanese people. Another major achievement included the automation of the real estate registry.

Siniora had close ties to late Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. He headed or advised many of Hariri's financial, banking, and philanthropic institutions. In October 2004, following the resignation of the government, Hariri appointed Siniora as Chairman of the Mediterranean Investors Group (MIG).

Siniora was the subject of a judicial investigation over alleged squandering of public funds in 1999.

Tammam Salam, former Member of Parliament

17. Salam was born in Beirut in 1945. The Salam family is one of the prominent traditional Sunni political families of Beirut. His late father was one of the heroes of Lebanon's independence in 1943. Hariri's political and financial powers undermined the role of the Salam family in Beirut. He is the son of former Prime Minister Saeb Salam.

Salam was elected a Member of Parliament in 1996. He lost his seat in 2000 because of the late Prime Minister Hariri's efforts against him. Salam was trying to mend fences with the Hariri camp in early 2005, ahead of the Spring Parliamentary elections. When Speaker Berri launched his response to the Bristol opposition group meetings, Salam participated in Berri's counterpart conclave known as "Ain Tineh." Salam abstained from attending the subsequent meeting "Ain Tineh II" after Hariri's assassination.

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